

Warakirri College's Fairfield and Blacktown campuses now accepting enrolments for 2019

Warakirri College is an independent high school for young people aged 15–22 completing Years 10 and 12. As a social impact initiative of MTC Australia students do not pay fees.

"There are no typical days at Warakirri!" says Principal Carolyn Blanden. "Many of our students have disconnected from mainstream education or cannot get a place in a traditional school. Some have mental health challenges, like anxiety and depression, that prevent them attending a large school. Our small friendly classrooms and family atmosphere enable them to cope better, and they're able to complete their schooling instead of dropping out.

"Some students face enormous life challenges. Often school is the only stable part of their lives, and the only source of support. We help by providing counselling, food and even clothing if it's needed, and referrals to therapists, Transition to Work providers and other educational institutions. We also provide all books and teaching materials and there are no fees.

"We run quite a lot of excursions, such as to plays, career expos, museums, Taronga Zoo and the mangrove swamps at Bicentennial Park. The Australian bush and beach can both be very dangerous if you haven't been shown how to keep safe. To combat this we organise outdoor education experiences like bushwalks and camps.

"The best job I've ever had has been as Principal of Warakirri College. It is such an honour to work with young people who desperately need a second chance. When I hear some of their stories at the enrolment interviews I'm often shocked by their experiences and the challenges they face. I feel very privileged to be able to help them get their lives back on track and enjoy the opportunities that come from completing their schooling.

It is so rewarding to see them at graduation, supported by multiple family members who tell me: "This is the first person in our family to finish Year 10 or get the HSC!"

Warakirri student snapshot: Rhiannon

Rhiannon came to Warakirri suffering such bad anxiety that she couldn't do an oral presentation unless the classroom was empty and the teacher was hiding under the desk listening to her. She had very low self-esteem and wasn't coping at her mainstream school.

She achieved excellent results in her HSC and graduated as Dux of Year 12. Warakirri provided lots of support with her university application. One teacher accompanied her to several campuses, talked to lecturers and helped with the UAC application.

Currently Rhiannon is really enjoying studying Forensic Science at the Western Sydney University Hawkesbury campus, as well as tutoring other students.

Warakirri student snapshot: Elia

Elia had been enrolled in various schools overseas but was finding it difficult to settle into a mainstream school in Australia, so she came to Warakirri to complete her HSC.

After school, Elia started working in the hospitality industry and kept on being promoted. She's now working full time as a function centre manager and is part of a management training program. She's planning to study events management and wants to open her own function centre one day.

Warakirri student snapshot: Cheyenne

Cheyenne came to Warakirri after an unhappy time at several mainstream schools. His anger management problems had led to difficulties with peers and teachers. The smaller, friendly environment at Warakirri helped Cheyenne control his anger and he was able to successfully complete his RoSA. Cheyenne is now happy and confident, and working as an apprentice plumber.

www.warakirricollege.nsw.edu.au

MTC Australia is the social enterprise that gives people the inspiration, capability and opportunity to create a fulfilling life. We deliver high impact employment, training and youth programs that help people gain skills for employment and entrepreneurship, build self-worth, and enable possibilities for transformative change.

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